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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 001918

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2015

TAGS: PHUM PTER CO

SUBJECT: MASSACRE OF 13 PERSONS IN URABA AREA

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

Summary

1. (C) On February 24, Embassy received reports that eight persons, including three members of the peace community of Apartado, had been killed, dismembered, and buried in two separate graves in the Uraba region of Antioquia Department. The Government of Colombia immediately sent members of the Fiscalia,s Human Rights Unit to the site as part of a larger investigative commission. On February 28, another site containing five bodies was reportedly found. Embassy will continue to follow up with all relevant actors.

Eight Bodies Found

2. (C) On February 21, eight individuals, including Luis Eduardo Guerra, a leader and member of the internal council of the so-called "peace community" of San Jose de Apartado, were killed by unknown assailants near the village of La Resbalosa (possibly in Cordoba Department), a seven-hour walk from San Jose, located in the Uraba region of Antioquia Department. The bodies of the three men, two women, and three children were found dismembered in two separate mass graves. The community, through its supporting NGO, the "Corporacion Juridica Libertad", based in Medellin, has already denounced the killings to the international community via the internet. The group has claimed there was an eyewitness who saw members of the 11th Army Brigade (based in Cordoba Department) detain these individuals before their bodies were discovered. Embassy does not have any information to corroborate this allegation and continues to investigate.

3. (C) Director of the Presidential Program for Human Rights, Carlos Franco, told the Embassy on February 24 of the situation and asked for NAS to authorize the use of a Plan Colombia aircraft to transport a team of special investigators from the Human Rights Unit of the Prosecutor General's Office ("Fiscalia") to the site. Franco said that he had heard reports that paramilitaries under the command of "Don Berna" had recently been active in the region where the killings took place.

4. (U) On February 25, a government commission, comprised of members of the Fiscalia, the CTI (the Fiscalia,s Technical Corps of Investigators), the Inspector General's Office ("Procuraduria"), the 17th Brigade (based in Carepa near Apartado), the Uraba Police, 100 members of the peace community, and representatives of FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation) and PBI (Peace Brigades International) arrived to the first massacre site, where five bodies were uncovered. The second site, which contained the bodies of Luis Eduardo, his wife and son, was found later that night by peace community members. Fiscalia representatives and other members of the commission arrived at the second site on the morning of February 27, due to weather conditions which prevented the takeoff of their helicopter on the afternoon of the 26th.

Another Site Discovered

5. (U) On February 28, Embassy received information from local FOR representative that another grave containing five bodies had reportedly been found roughly three hours walking distance outside the peace community. It is believed these are the bodies of five peasants who had been declared missing the day before. A commission from the peace community, along with PBI and FOR representatives, plan to visit this site on March 1.

Comment

6. (C) Embassy has been in frequent contact with Carlos Franco and with local representatives of FOR to receive updates. There is no way of evaluating the different reports at this time. The authors of the crime are still unknown and neither the GOC nor international organizations have

implicated any group. The previously-scheduled hearings regarding the peace community before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica are still planned for March 14. Embassy will continue to follow up with all relevant actors.

WOOD